

COLUMN FROM MAYOR TIM SHADBOLT

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The most embarrassing news for Council this week has been the shock/horror revelations over the private use of the Council credit card. The problem we face as a Council is trying to separate 'Tim the performer' from 'Tim the Mayor'. I believe the two positions are hopelessly intertwined.

Plenty of Mayors have other private jobs. Our second longest serving Mayor, Russell Miller, was a surgeon at Southland Hospital as well as being a Mayor. However, there is a huge separation between working as a surgeon and working as a Mayor. However, the line between being a performer and being a Mayor is razor thin.

Over 90% of the work I do is raising money for charity and whenever I perform whether it's private work or Council work, I'm always introduced as the Mayor of Invercargill. I believe my two jobs are complementary and it is impossible to separate them. I would like to see an independent cost benefit analysis of my Mayoralty so that we not only examine the costs of having a high profile Mayor, but we also, with just as much passion and determination, examine the benefits.

Destructive 'snouts in the trough' stories about public figures are easy to produce and generate a widespread reaction from the cynics. Examining the cost of everything but value of nothing distorts the truth. When I was a concrete contractor I spent \$200,000 a year on ready mix concrete. That may sound like outrageous extravagance if you isolate the 'cost' without including the 'benefits'. I employed two people and made enough profit to raise my family. Therefore the 'costs' were balanced by the 'benefits'.